WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for obtaining postage comprising:

accessing a first server;

receiving hypertext information from said first server, said hypertext information including postage-related content;

displaying said hypertext information;

detecting user input indicating selection of said postage-related content; and

in response to said detecting, receiving from said first server information for printing an indicium that originates from a second server.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein said detecting includes transmitting said user input to said first server.

3. The method of claim 1 further including printing said information for printing an indicium on a printable medium.

4. The method of claim 3 wherein said receiving said information for printing an indicium includes receiving a printing software component, said printing including executing said printing software component.

5. The method of claim 3 wherein said printing is initiated in response to said receiving said information for printing an indicium, absent user intervention.

6. The method of claim 3 wherein said printing is initiated in response to a user request to print said information for printing an indicium.

7. The method of claim 1 wherein said information for printing an indicium is a bitmap image.

8. The method of claim 1 wherein said information for printing an indicium is postage indicium data.

9. The method of claim 1 further including selecting a background image, said background image to be combined with said information for printing an indicium.

1   10.   The method of claim 1 further including sending a background

2   image to said first server, said receiving said information for printing an indicium

3   including incorporation of said background image to said information for printing an

4   indicium.

1   11.   The method of claim 1 wherein said first server is a web site.

1   12.   The method of claim 1 wherein said second server is a postal

2   server.

1   13.   A computer program product for obtaining postage, comprising:

2   code for accessing a first server;

3   code for receiving hypertext information from said first server, said

4   hypertext information including postage-related content;

5   code for displaying said hypertext information;

6   code for detecting user input indicating selection of said postage-related

7   content;

8   code for receiving from said first server information for printing an

9   indicium that originates from a second server, in response to said detecting; and

10   a computer-readable medium for storing said codes.

1   14.   The computer program product of claim 13 wherein said code for

2   detecting includes code for transmitting said user input to said first server.

1   15.   The computer program product of claim 13 further including code

2   for printing said information for printing an indicium on a printable medium.

1   16.   The computer program product of claim 15 wherein said code for

2   receiving includes code for receiving a printing software component, said code for

3   printing including code for executing said printing software component.

1   17.   The computer program product of claim 15 wherein said code for

2   printing is initiated in response to receiving said information for printing an indicium,

3   absent user intervention.

1   18.   The computer program product of claim 15 wherein said code for

2 printing is initiated in response to a user request to print said information for printing an

3 indicium.

1   19.   The computer program product of claim 13 wherein said

2 information for printing an indicium comprises a bitmap image.

1   20.   The computer program product of claim 13 wherein said

2 information for printing an indicium comprises postage indicium data.

1   21.   The computer program product of claim 13 further including code

2 for receiving a background image from said first server, said background image to be

3 combined with said information for printing an indicium.

1   22.   The computer program product of claim 13 further including code

2 for sending a background image to said first server, said first server combining said

3 background image with said information for printing an indicium.

1   23.   A method for dispensing postage comprising:

2   receiving requests for postage from one or more users at a first server

3 system;

4   communicating with a second server system, including communicating

5 said requests for postage, said second server system providing information for printing

6 indicia; and

7   receiving said information for printing indicia from said second server

8 system, wherein said information for printing indicia is then distributed to said one or

9 more users to satisfy said requests for postage.

1   24.   The method of claim 23 further including receiving user-provided

2 information from said one or more users relating to a payment mechanism, wherein said

3 requests for postage each includes a user-provided information, wherein said providing

4 information for printing indicia includes verifying payment of said postage based on said

5 user-provided information.

1   25.   The method of claim 24 wherein said user-provided information is

2 credit card information.

1   26.   The method of claim 23 wherein said requests for postage each

2 includes a payment mechanism associated with said first server system, wherein said

3 providing information for printing indicia includes verifying payment of said postage

4 based on said payment mechanism.

1   27.   The method of claim 23 wherein said information for printing

2 indicia comprises one or more bitmap images.

1   28.   The method of claim 23 wherein said information for printing

2 indicia comprises one or more postage indicium data.

1   29.   The method of claim 23 further including providing background

2 image information for enhancing said information for printing indicia.

1   30.   The method of claim 23 wherein said communicating is based on

2 XML protocols.

1   31.   The method of claim 23 wherein said second server system

2 transmits a postage printing software component to said first server system.

1   32.   A computer-readable medium containing instructions that controls

2 a computer system to dispensing postage to users, by:

3   receiving requests for postage from one or more of said users;

4   communicating with a server system, including communicating said

5 requests for postage, said server system providing information for printing indicia; and

6   receiving said information for printing indicia from said server system,

7 wherein said information for printing indicia is then distributed to said one or more users

8 to satisfy said requests for postage.

1   33.   The computer-readable medium of claim 32 further containing

2 instructions to control said computer system to include, with each of said requests for

3 postage, a user-provided payment mechanism, wherein said providing information for

4 printing indicia includes verifying payment of said postage based on said user-provided

5 payment mechanism.

1   34.   The computer-readable medium of claim 33 further containing
2   instructions to control said computer system to receive information relating to said user-
3   provided payment mechanism from said one or more users.

1   35.   The computer-readable medium of claim 34 wherein said payment
2   mechanism is a credit card.

1   36.   The computer-readable medium of claim 32 further containing
2   instructions to control said computer system to include, with each of said requests for
3   postage, a payment mechanism associated with said first server system, wherein said
4   providing information for printing indicia includes verifying payment of said postage
5   based on said payment mechanism.

1   37.   The computer-readable medium of claim 32 wherein said
2   information for printing indicia comprises one or more bitmap images.

1   38.   The computer-readable medium of claim 32 wherein said
2   information for printing indicia comprises one or more postage indicium data.

1   39.   The computer-readable medium of claim 32 further containing
2   instructions to control said computer system to provide background image information for
3   enhancing said information for printing indicia.

1   40.   The computer-readable medium of claim 32 further including
2   instructions for communicating with said second server system using XML protocols.

1   41.   The computer-readable medium of claim 32 further including
2   instructions for receiving from said second server system a postage printing software
3   component.

1   42.   A method for distributing postage comprising:
2   providing a first server system;
3   providing a second server system;
4   receiving, at said first server system, requests for postage from users;
5   sending said requests for postage to said second server system, including
6   providing a payment mechanism to pay for said postage;

35

7   dispensing postage from said second server system to said first server

8   system, including validating payment for said postage based on said payment mechanism;

9   and

10   distributing said postage from said first server system to satisfy said

11   requests for postage.

1   43.   The method of claim 42 wherein said requests for postage each

2   includes a user-provided payment mechanism.

1   44.   The method of claim 42 wherein said requests for postage each

2   includes a payment mechanism associated only with said first server system.

1   45.   The method of claim 42 wherein said distributing said postage is a

2   step of transmitting information for printing one or more indicia to said users.

1   46.   The method of claim 42 wherein said first server system is separate

2   from said second server system.

1   47.   The method of claim 5a wherein said dispensing postage includes

2   sending a postage request from said first server system to said second server system.

1   48.   The method of claim 47 wherein said postage request is based on a

2   single request for postage.

1   49.   The method of claim 47 wherein said postage request is based on

2   more than one request for postage.

1   50.   The method of claim 42 wherein said distributing said postage

2   includes transmitting a postage printing software component.

1   51.   The method of claim 5a wherein said second server is a postal

2   server.

1   52.   The method of claim 42 wherein said second server system

2   dispenses postage in the form of information for printing one or more indicia.

1   53.   The method of claim 52 wherein said information for printing one

2   or more indicia comprises one or more bitmap images.

1   54.   The method of claim 52 wherein said information for printing one

2 or more indicia comprises postage indicium data.

1   55.   The method of claim 52 further including providing one or more

2 background images for selection by said users; said distributing said postage including

3 combining one or more selected ones of said background images with said information

4 for printing one or more indicia.

1   56.   A system for distributing postage to plural users, comprising:

2   a postal server system;

3   a first server system separate from said postal server system and in

4 communication therewith over a data communication network; and

5   a second server system separate from said postal server system and in

6 communication therewith over said data communication network,

7   said first and second server systems each configured to receive postage

8 requests from users for purchasing postage,

9   said first and second server systems each further configured to send

10 requests to said postal server system to obtain postage from said postal server system,

11   said first and second server systems each further configured to transmit

12 said postage to said users, thereby satisfying said postage requests.

1   57.   The system of claim 56 wherein said postage comprises

2 information for printing indicia.

1   59.   The system of claim 57 wherein said information for printing

2 indicia comprises postage indicium data.

1   60.   The system of claim 57 wherein said information for printing

2 indicia comprises bitmap information.

1   61.   The system of claim 56 wherein said first server system is

2 configured to include a user-provided payment mechanism in its requests to obtain

3 postage.

1   62.   The system of claim 61 wherein said payment mechanism is a

2 credit card.

1   63.   The system of claim 56 wherein said first server system includes a

2   payment mechanism, said first server system configured to include said payment

3   mechanism in its requests to obtain postage, said payment mechanism being associated

4   with said first server system.

1   64.   The method of claim 56 wherein said data communication network

2   includes a secure communication channel.

1   65.   The method of claim 64 wherein said secure communication

2   channel is based on a data transmission protocol, including XML protocol.

1   66.   The method of claim 64 wherein said secure communication

2   channel is a land line.